

Two anti-trend predictions that will be true in 2019, and 2119

 By [Matt Ross](#)

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I've stopped going to conferences.

For two reasons.

One. Every speaker uses 'information' to plug their business/agency/book/self and will just assemble and then regurgitate the opinions of others' as their own, all neatly wrapped in the peddle of whatever new technology best suits their needs.

Two. Any hack with a Keynote presentation feels the right to make predictions on the future. Often wild and fearful predictions. None of these ever end up being true. And they are never held accountable. Trumpian to the extreme.



Matt Ross, COO at King James Digital.

Did anyone predict WPP's 50% drop in share price? Did anyone predict Zuck's congressional hearing? Did anyone predict #metoo?

Not. One. Single. Person.

We laugh at circus fortune tellers with crystal balls.

Yet marketing 'experts' 'informed' 'predictions' are expected to be digested by us with gracious nodding earnestness.

Please.

Typically, trends articles are fun to read, and pointless to apply. They're like giving a chimp a machine gun. One or two bullets might hit the mark, but most of the buggers are going to lodge themselves in Granny's porch.

Assuming you want to shoot at Granny.

And why would you? All she ever wanted was for you to call her back.

Anyway.

The two bullets that hit Granny (she lives, but that limp is worse) are through sheer luck. Not knowledge. Not mysticism. Not having your finger more firmly on the pulse than anyone else.

Luck. Dumb, plain, simple luck.

And every other trend prediction serves to confuse clients and agencies even further. "Here, you lot! A bunch more focal points for you to consider/add/action/leverage/whatever."

Oh joy. More things in an already saturated and confusing world. Just what we need.

The irony is that they don't focus you. They do the exact opposite. We are like these bloody penguins. Chasing a pretty little shiny light.

In Yuval Noah Harari's incredible second book *Homo Deus*, he prefaces by saying that any extrapolation where humankind is going to end up, is a pointless exercise. With so many millions of tendrils of possibility, it is futile.

Now, I'm not saying that marketing trend predictions are as complex as humankind's predictions. Or that one year of evolution is the same as 200. But. If you're wrong by a millimetre or a mile, you're still wrong.

Trends are by their nature transitory. Impermanent. Relevant one second, and irrelevant the next.

So, what I am going to do is give you focus. Focus on what is always true. Always relevant. Never new. Two predictions that will be true in 2019, and 2119.

Kind of an anti-trends article in amongst all the fantastical predictions of robots and laser-focused re-re-re-re-targeting.

Sorry everyone else. The future may prove you right. Until then...

We sell one thing

We sell ideas.

Our product is ideas. We are an ideas business.

I can hear the hurricane of breaths being sucked through teeth. See the thousands of eyeballs rolling in their sockets.

“Yes. Yes. Little creative. We know you love ideas. The new. The brain titillating.”

You know who else loves those things?

People.

Customers.

And we are in service of our client's customers.

So, let me put it in a seriously articulated sentence:

Our job is to create investment-worthy ideas to bring our clients' brands closer to their customers.

That's it.

And we forget that too easily.

The best place for those ideas to live will always change. The ideas won't.

Advertising's first objective is to gain the attention of a lot of people. There is far too much focus on *where* to gain that attention. Not enough attention on *how* to gain that attention.

There's only one sustainably effective way.

You gain that attention through original, provocative ideas.

In our experience, the best ideas have a magnetism that draws people to them. Whether that is heartrendingly emotional film or a beautifully intuitive digital utility.

That then renders all the discourse and noise and optionality and confusion moot.

Someone once said to me that bad jazz just sounded like a bunch of people all talking at the same time.

We're a bad jazz band at the moment.

Our industry is losing the ingrained skepticism that has been its guiding light for 50 years.

We're accepting the 'gospel' of Big Tech. Of ill-informed clients. Of inexperienced employees.

Stop it. Ask why. If the answer isn't simple, call the bullshit.

It almost always is.

Change is the only constant

South Africa is still an economy of two marked halves. Developed and developing. Brands want 'in' on the developing market. It's where precious growth lies. And it's where 'traditional' advertising is still supremely effective. Big brand broadcast. Radio. OOH. Building brand through sheer scale and power.

On the developed side it's different. Ads are the least trusted form of sales. People you know, editorial, reviews - all are considered far more valuable by people in their consumption consideration set. Ads are near the bottom. It's why we've found huge growth in the 'content' marketing space. Ads that feel less like ads. The explosion in the importance of CRM and customer experience is directly attributed to the meteoric plummeting of our trust in ads.

In our country, we are in the position of having to cater for both these halves. Meaning we need to offer our clients both these services. Brand building communications and brand adoring customer experience. There is power in being able to offer that full spectrum of service. There are few that can.

So, get used to changing.

Get used to the continual expending of enormous amounts of energy. Get used to perpetual discomfort. Get used to invariably not having the answer. Get used to permanent learning. Get used to finding new revenue streams.

Those that adhere to outdated dogma, entrenched interests and conventional wisdom are, excuse me, fucked.

We are paid to be creative.

It seems that we are very good at being creative for our clients. But not very good at being creative for ourselves.

Time to change.

ABOUT MATT ROSS

Matt's love of original, ground-breaking ideas and technologies have taken him across the globe to create multi-award winning campaigns and products for numerous clients including Nike, Volkswagen, Honda, Playstation, Hasbro, Guinness and Coca-Cola.

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